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"THE SAUCY ARETHUSA."

BY HOWARD J. SAVAGE.

IN September, 1920, Langdon Warner, Esq., of Philadelphia, director of the Pennsylvania Museum, purchased from an American dealer for his private collection a manuscript volume¹ of some one hundred pages, bound in parchment, and containing various notes evidently made by a student of navigation, some poems, and a drawing in colors of a Barbary corsair. It was this drawing which first attracted Mr. Warner's attention. But upon examination he found that the notes included what appeared to be the logs of two voyages on English warships at the period of the American Revolution, and the solutions of various problems in a course in navigation. The poems were "A Hymn for a Chapter of Royal Arch Masons," "by Brother Dunckerley," a sentimental ballad, with the first line, "When war's alarms enticed my Willy from me;" and a longer poem dealing with the "Arethusa." Mr. Warner very kindly placed the manuscript at my disposal; and I began an investigation, which, though incomplete, has led me into devious ways.

On the fly-leaf of the volume stands the name "John Williams." Below this, in the same hand, is written, "John Williams His Book 1779," beneath which, in a second handwriting, were traced, "Newburyport," "John," "Dr," "John Williams." On the inside of the front cover is written the name "William Williams" in (probably) the same hand as the word "Newburyport." The water-marking of the pages, which are twelve and seven-eighths by eight inches in size, is a circular medallion, surmounted by a crown; within the medallion, Britannia, seated upon a throne or chair, with St. George's Cross; in her right hand she holds a sceptre, and in her left a spear; and she wears a crested helmet. Another water-mark, which occurs less frequently in the paper, is composed of the initials G R and a crown.

The two logs are entitled as follows: the first, "A Journal of a Voyage by God's Permisson ine the Orford Man of War from Rabbett or Cunney Island in Latt^d. 33°· 30^m South Long^d. 17°· 44^m East To the Island of Saint Helna in Latt^d. 16°· 00^m South and Long^d. 06°· 04^m West Kipt by John Williams in the year 1779;" the second, "A Journal from Trincomelay In the Island of Zelone to Madrass

¹In 1921 Mr. Warner presented the manuscript volume to the Harvard College Library.

Trincomelay in Latt^d. 08° 32' N and Long^d. 81° 40' East Madrass in Latt^d. 13° 08' and Long^d. 80° 44' East." The first entry of the "Orford" log is dated 30 January, 1779, and the last 12 February, 1779; the first entry of the second, 9 January, 1779, and the last 20 January, 1779. Now, from the dates it is manifest that the two voyages could not have been taken by the same sailor, though the first of the two logs is stated to have been kept by John Williams. From lists in the "Gentleman's Magazine" (1779-80) which purport to give the composition of the British Navy and of the various fleets, it appears that British ships were in both localities at the specified times; but in no item of about this time does the "Orford" man-of-war appear. Yet the two voyages are logged with circumstantial accuracy as regards seamanship, weather, runs, signals, and honors. From these facts, then, it may be safely inferred only that in 1779 one John Williams was studying navigation. He was in the British Navy, perhaps as a petty officer qualifying for promotion, and he kept his notes and his models for logs of future commands in a book furnished by the Admiralty.

Now, Mr. Lawrence Brainerd, of the Massachusetts Historical Society, informs me that the Records of the Marine Society of Newburyport, Mass., where Williams was an infrequent name, report that Capt. William Williams joined the Society in 1819, and died in Newburyport on Sept. 2, 1841, at the age of seventy-five. His birth, however, is "not to be recorded in the vicinity of the Newburys," though he married in 1813, and his son, William, Jr., was born in 1814. Neither Williams appears in the United States Navy Register. It is therefore possible, the vital statistics and the names in the manuscript being taken together, that this particular William Williams was the son of John Williams, formerly of the British Navy, and that, born in England, he brought with him to America among his effects his father's notes on navigation.

From a literary point of view, far more interest attaches to the poem, "Come all you Jolly Sailors bold." The text as it occurs in the manuscript is printed below, but it is far longer and more complete and concrete than the version of which the school-boy, from Tom Brown on, has been fond. Now, the usual or standard text was first printed in 1796, in Act II, Scene iv, of Prince Hoare's musical entertainment "Lock and Key." The scene is before Brummagem's house in Devonshire. Cheerly, a naval officer, enters with six sailors. He has been paying court to Laura, Brummagem's niece, somewhat unsuccessfully as regards the uncle, and his six sailors "appear dissatisfied." "What!" exclaims the hero, "Slack in stays! Why, do you think Cheerly prefers his mistress to his duty? No, no, my lads! My country's service, you rewarded, and then my love. . . . One

farewell . . . and . . . then for Arethusa's glory." Then he sings the song in the widely known version of Hoare.

Let us now glance at the history of Prince Hoare's version of the "Arethusa" poem; then at certain accounts of the battle with the "Belle Poule" and of the English frigate herself; and finally at the relationship between the two poems on the fight.

Prince Hoare, born at Bath in 1755, was educated at the local grammar school, and more particularly by his father, William Hoare (*D.N.B.*, 26 : 25). In 1772 he went to London to study at the Royal Academy. After some four years of work (1776-80) at Rome under Mengs, he returned to England, exhibiting at the Royal Academy in 1781 and 1782. In 1788 he took for his health a voyage to Lisbon, whence he returned to London in June. Shortly afterward he began to write for the stage.

His musical entertainment "Lock and Key" had its premier either in 1791 or in 1796. Mr. William C. Lane, librarian of the Harvard College Library, has written to me that in the edition of the farce printed by John Cumberland, London (n.d.), the date of the first performance is given (p. 7) as 1791. Clarence, in his "'Stage' Cyclopedia" (p. 225), also gives the date of the first performance as 1791, and the theatre as the Haymarket. But the Shaw Collection at Harvard College contains two play-bills, which announce for Tuesday, Feb. 2, and Wednesday, Feb. 3, 1796, the "New Musical Farce" as to be performed for the "(First Time)" and "(2d Time)," respectively, at Covent Garden. Genest (*English Stage* [Bath, 1832], 7 : 267-268), who seems to have had some basis for personal judgment, — perhaps the printed text, — calls it "a moderate piece." Furthermore, there is no place for a first performance of the farce in the London theatrical season of 1791 as Genest gives it. The traditional date for the production, 1796, finds further corroboration in the obituary notices of Prince Hoare, printed in 1835. It is as nearly correct as need be for present purposes.

"The Arethusa" was sung by Charles Benjamin Incledon in the character of Cheerly. Incledon was the most popular ballad-singer of his day. In 1817 he visited America, and afterward travelled through Britain as "The Wandering Melodist." For at least twenty-five years "Lock and Key" was a popular entertainment on the London stage, and in Dublin, New York, and Philadelphia. It was first printed in 1796, with a second edition, for T. M. Longman, "correctly taken from the prompt book," in 1797. The song was issued separately as sheet-music probably in 1796 in the "Books of the Songs to be had at the Theatre," "as sung by Mr. Incledon," certainly before 1826. The musical setting is by Shields. As a recitation, "The Arethusa" has long been popular with elocutionists, both

amateur and professional. It began its separate career as a poem as early as its appearance in "All the Year Round" (37 : 100); and it has more recently been reprinted in Mr. W. S. Braithwaite's "Book of Georgian Verse," in Goodchild's "Battle Poems and Patriotic Verse," in W. F. Henley's "Lyra Heroica," and in Lady Sybil Scott's "Book of the Sea."

We turn now to the historical events in which both poems are grounded. The sea-fight between the "Arethusa" frigate, Capt. Marshall, and the French "Belle Poule" under La Clochetterie, occurred on June 17, 1778, near the Island of Ouessant. "Une flotte anglaise de vingt vaisseaux," writes Martin (*Histoire de France* [Paris, 1865], 16 : 429-30) "aux ordres de l'amiral Keppel, étant venue faire une reconnaissance vers Brest, rencontra deux frégates françaises . . . (17 Juin [1778]). La guerre n'étant pas déclarée, Keppel ne fit pas tout d'abord assailler les frégates. Il les somma de venir à la poupe de son vaisseau pour répondre à ses questions. La plus avancée des deux frégates, *la Licorne*, refusa. On tira sur elle: enveloppée, elle lâcha sa bordée et se rendit. La seconde frégate, *la Belle-Poule*, . . . fit force de voiles pour échapper; poursuivie et atteinte près de la côte par la frégate anglaise *l'Aréthuse*, elle la désempara après un combat de cinq heures, la força de se retirer vers sa flotte, et rentra victorieuse à Brest, aux acclamations de la marine et de la population."

The English version, as published in the "London Gazette" of Saturday, June 27, 1778, and retailed in the "Gentleman's Magazine" (June, 1778), differs, as might be expected, in certain particulars:—

"By a second letter, dated June 20, the Admiral speaks of the return of the Valiant and Monarch with the Arethusa in tow. She had come up with her chace, which proved to be the Belle Poule, and had requested the French Captain to bring to, and informed him that the Admiral wished to speak with him; with both which requests he refused to comply. Captain Marshal then fired a shot across him, which was instantly returned by a whole broadside. This brought on a brisk action on both sides, which continued upwards of two hours. The Arethusa, being much shattered in her mast, sails, and rigging, was thrown in such a situation, that she could not get her head towards the French ship, which stood into a small bay, where boats at day light came out and towed her into safety. The Arethusa had eight men killed [*sic*], and 36 wounded: the loss of the French must be considerable. . . . The Alert cutter, at the same time engaged a schooner . . . and . . . took her. . . . This is an authentic account of what has happened, tho' the Admiral's letters are too long to be inserted at full length."

Now, it happened that an acute observer and racy *raconteur*, John O'Keeffe, Irish actor-playwright, visited the "Arethusa" "a few hours after the engagement," and he set down his impressions in his "Recol-

lections” (1 : 371 ff.). His account Professor George Lyman Kittredge very kindly brought to my attention.

“After the . . . action between the Belle Poule and the Arethusa, I went on board the latter ship [of war] . . . and saw the horrible and dreadful state . . . ; the Arethusa then lying close by Blockhouse point, where they were getting the wounded . . . into Haslar hospital. Lord Charles Fitzgerald (brother to the Duke of Leinster) was a lieutenant of this ship. The officer on board, with great minuteness described the engagement to me. . . . The Arethusa fired a shot into the water . . . in the sailor phrase, ‘across her [the *Belle-Poule*’s] fore-foot’ to bring her to. This was answered by a full broadside from the Belle Poule, and the slaughter commenced: each ship, when they parted, so crippled, supposed its adversary could not get into port. As Lord Charles stood on the quarter deck, a seaman handing him a cup of refreshment, had his head taken off by a ball.” . . .

Here O’Keeffe details the horrors below decks with the unctuousness of a war correspondent in 1916, and concludes, —

“After this beginning, the war went on in all its horrors; and then came the squabble between Keppel and Palliser, with riots and illuminations in Pall-mall and St. James’s-square; and Court-martials, and all that.”

What remains of the story of the “Arethusa” is soon told. During the engagement of the 27th, the frigate, still under Marshall, was selected by Keppel to transmit signals, probably because she was so badly damaged as not to be fit for combatant use. In this fight the controversy between Keppel and Sir Hugh Palliser had its inception. Charges of misconduct and neglect of duty were preferred against Keppel, and, after lengthy sittings of a court-martial at Plymouth, he was acquitted. During the trial, in answering one of the charges, Keppel said (*Gentleman’s Magazine*, 49 : 60, citing *London Gazette*), “On the 30th of June I sailed with twenty ships of the line and very fortunately I fell in with the Belle Poule and other French frigates; and the letters and papers found on board them were of material service to the State. Captain Marshall distinguished himself with the greatest honour. I confess that when I fell in with those two frigates, I was at a loss how to act.” The dry humor of the last sentence is appreciable when one recalls that on June 17, 1778, not June 30, as Keppel is quoted, war had not been declared between England and France. The “other French frigates” were the “*Licorne*” and her tender, and the “*Belle-Poule*’s.” Marshall was summoned as witness for the prosecution. Naturally, when Keppel was acquitted and received the thanks of the Commons and the commendation of the Lords, Marshall’s reputation suffered and he was relieved of his command. Both Keppel and he testified at Palliser’s court-martial. The Vice-Admiral of the Blue was also acquitted, on

15] thinking it was not safe to stay,
tho fast they Ran we on them gain'd,
Tho quick the Race, came up at Last, and then they
thought it fit by Class,
Their Courses for to Alter,

2

20] Then thay Bore Large before the wind,
thinking to leave us all behind,
but to their sad mistake did find,
two of our Ships did lead them,
the Arithusa and the Alirt,
Neither Sheet Brace nor tack did start,
25] but every man to their quarters stand,
the Alirt did lye, in the winds Eye,
Arithusa seem'd to fly,
So we came up and Spoke them,

3

[Page in MS.

30] We fired a Shot with that Intent,
to bring him to and a head it went,
but we found they were for Mischeif bent,
Eighthter to take or Sink us,
Marshal on Borard the Frigate to,
the Frenchman he cries out Hollo,
35] he Says bring to no that wont do,
Come under the Lee of our Admiral Said he,
no no Says the Frenchman that never can be,
for you'l make Sure to take us,

4

40] The Bellapoole was their Commadore,
She mounts swivels Just a Score,
and Carriage guns had forty fouer,
All¹ Eighteens twelves & Sixes,
Five hundred men on her decks did Dance,
the best that could be found in france,
45] all the wonder of those men,
how they did laugh and call it Stuff,
to think that we should be bold Anought,
to offer to Engage them,

5

50] Two hundred men was our Ships crew,
twenty Six twelve Pounders you might View,
and Six Sixes made thirty two,
besides we had Eight Swivels,
Monsueir he gave us a whole broadside,
Huzza huzza we all hands cried,

¹ The word "All" has a cross aboveti.

55] their langridge shot it came so hot,
 fire boys fire is all our desire,
 Sooner than Strike wel'l all Expire,
 on Board of the Arithusa,

6

[Page in MS.

60] We Returned monsuir his whole Broad side,
 mobleau mobleau the french Dogs cried,
 whilst Numbers of them Run to hide,
 of the forecastle Poop and gangway,
 Captain Marshal cries brave boys,
 fight on I Like to hear your noise,
 65] Whilst we have a Gun wee'd Scorn to run,
 Smoke and fire is all our Desire,
 Sooner than Strike wel'l all Expire,
 on Board the Arithusa,

7

70] Our first Lieut^t. Labetee,
 behaved with Skill and bravery,
 Dont fire in Vain brave boys Sais he,
 but take good aim and holl them,
 Lord Phitsgerarald next did stand,
 in Commission with sword in hand,
 75] the game I Like,
 we will them Strike,
 Smoke and fire is all our desire,
 Sooner then Strike we'll all Expire,
 on Board the Arithusa,

8

80] Picket our Master behaved well,
 which many on Board of our ship can tell,
 for when our Shot uppon them fell,
 he Said brave Boys thats in them,
 we kept our Ship Still Broad side to,
 85] whilst Round grape and dubble head flew,
 but Still we cried our guns supply,
 Smoke and fire is all our desire,
 Sooner then Strike wel'l all Expire,
 on Board the Arithusa,

9

90] Our Petty officers were as Good,
 Our Decks were sprinkeld ouer with blood,
 Still Every man to quarters stood;
 our Captains hand was woundid,
 our first Lieutenant he was Shot,

95] Lord Charles had a woundid foot, [Page in MS.
but Still he cries your guns Supply,
Somke [*sic*] and fire is all our desire,
Sooner than Strike we will all Expire,
on Board of the Arithusa,

10

100] Seven half glases then Ran out
twenty five Minuts went about,
Still Resolved we were not to give out,
altho being Sorarly Chatterd,
Our bast and Rrigging being all Shot,
105] Scarce a whole rope in the Spip we had got,
in a Light gale those Dogs made Sail,
tired of our play Run a way,
because they could no longer Stay,
Along Side of the Arithusa,

11

110] This Action was on the French Shore,
Distance about three mile no more,
there hull it was so wrack'd and tore,
thay Scarce could keep from sinking,
the Leake it gaining so fast all Round,
115] which obligd those dogs to Run a ground,
the Next we, did them See,
it was under the Land,
uppon the Strand,
She never was so soarly Bang'd,
120] As by the Arithusa,

12

the Valiant She came up next Day,
as Like a log of Wood we lay,
and soon she towed our ship Away,
we Riged a Juery fourmast,
125] its now our dangers is all our,
and Drove these french Dogs on the Shore,
Come let us Dring God save the King,
our Captain to and all our Ships Crew,
and all that Doth belong unto,
the Jovial Arithusa

13

Fines